



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES
September 23, 2013
5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

F. Acosta, D. Sterner, R. Corcoran, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Reed, J. Waltman

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, T. Butler, D. Cituk, M. Bembenick, C. Snyder, E. Lloyd

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order at 5:04 pm by Council Vice President Goodman-Hinnershitz and Council President Acosta. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that the presentation on the sewer rate has been delayed until late October and that Ms. Snyder is going to update Council on two (2) issues during the sewer rate presentation timeslot.

I. CRIZ – City Revitalization and Improvement Zone

Ms. Snyder stated that the CRIZ is a financing program to stimulate the creation of jobs and businesses in cities with more than 39,000 residents, excluding Harrisburg. Currently Reading is one of nine (9) cities who are eligible for this program.

Ms. Snyder stated that two cities will receive the designation in 2013 or early 2014. After 2015 additional cities can receive the designation. She stated that Lancaster is rumored to be one of the cities that will be designated in 2013-14, as they have already completed their application. Although she questioned how Lancaster could have completed the application as the guidelines will not be released until October. She stated that applications are due to the State in late November, early December.

Ms. Snyder explained that the State will allocate funding that can be drawn down via bond and the bond will be repaid through the deferred tax revenue from taxes coming from the new jobs or businesses. The taxes used to repay the debt include personal income tax, state sales tax, state and local income tax and local business tax, etc.

The application must be submitted by a new authority created by an ordinance approved by City Council, under the MAA (Municipalities Authorities Act). This authority must be a standalone and cannot be an existing authority “wearing a new hat”. The CRIZ zone can be up to 130 acres and the 130 acres do not need to be contiguous.

Ms. Snyder stated that the administration is currently weighing the options and that they currently believe that the CRIZ compliments other existing programs.

Ms. Snyder stated that the membership of the CRIZ is under discussion; however, she noted that a representative from the Council Office is needed. Mr. Acosta stated that he will take on that role and that Ms. Kelleher will take his place when he is unavailable.

II. Enterprise Zone Application

Ms. Snyder stated that the Enterprise Zone is a multi-municipality partnership to market unused or under used manufacturing areas. She explained that municipalities can join together to prepare and submit one (1) application that contains a strategic plan for an entire region. She stated that the application is not site-specific and that the areas must be contiguous.

Ms. Snyder explained that Greater Berks is in discussion with the DCED about using this program in Berks County. She stated that Cumru and Muhlenberg are very interested in forming a partnership for this Enterprise Zone. Due to the need for the region must be contiguous in this program, Reading would need to be partner in their application. To move forward Council will need to adopt a resolution expressing support for the partnership and the initiative. However, this would not commit the City to any funding. Approving the resolution would only move the City into the planning phase with Cumru and Muhlenberg.

Mr. Waltman stated that the Enterprise Zone and the CRIZ are new band-aids and that a comprehensive plan for Reading must be established to tie all plans and initiatives together into a cohesive way to improve Reading.

Council agreed to move forward with the planning phase.

III. Alvernia Baseball Field Lease Amendment

Ms. Butler introduced Mr. Fisher, Finance Vice President at Alvernia and Ms. Masano, Alvernia’s legal counsel. Ms. Butler stated that the original lease agreement began on July 1, 2007 and that this will be the first amendment. She stated that the document distributed shows only the amended language. She stated that she will incorporate the amendments into the original lease before the October 14th meeting when the ordinance is eligible for enactment.

Ms. Butler stated that the lease is set to run on the same period as the lease agreement with Angelica Park, a term of 56 years. She stated that the amendment defines the City’s use of the

ball field in paragraph 4.1.c which is permitted after the close of Alvernia's NCAA baseball schedule.

Mr. Acosta stressed the need to keep the public informed and aware that this entire Park is a public space, not a component of Alvernia's campus. Mr. Fisher stated that a City of Reading sign was placed around the bridge area before the access road where the directional signs to Alvernia are located.

Ms. Reed suggested adding the City's name to the directional sign that currently sits at the access road off Route 10.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the Rec Commission is also concerned that the time constraints placed on the use of the field will disrupt the Rec Commission's ability to collect fees through the rental of the field for tournaments. She suggested that Mr. Fisher attend a Rec Commission meeting to address this issue.

Mr. Corcoran and Mr. Acosta noted that the superb condition of the park and the fields since Alvernia has been managing them.

IV. Agenda Review

- **Consent Agenda**

A. Resolution – exonerating the 2011 property taxes, interest and penalty for 112 Mulberry St., owned by the Central PA African American Museum for a total of \$387.59. **(Council Staff)**

All supporting paperwork has been provided and an agenda memo recommends approving an exoneration of 2011 taxes, as was approved by the County and the School District.

9. ORDINANCES FOR FINAL PASSAGE

A. Bill No. 41-2013 – amending the City's Code by adding a new chapter regarding regulations for the permitting and inspection of tattoo and piercing establishments **(Board of Health)** *Advertised 9-15-13; Introduced at the September 9 regular meeting*

B. Bill No. 42-2013 – amending the City's Code to add a Tattoo Establishment Inspection Fee \$100 and an application fee of \$50 **(Board of Health)** *Advertised 9-15-13; Introduced at the September 9 regular meeting*

Mr. Acosta stated that these two pieces of legislation were brought forward by the Board of Health, where they were properly vetted through Law and with the owners of tattoo establishments.

C. Bill No. 43-2013 – authorizing the execution of a tri-party lease agreement between the City of Reading, the Berks County Conservancy and Alvernia University; a lease agreement between the City of Reading and Alvernia University and a lease agreement between the City of Reading and the Berks County Conservancy to provide for the leasing of certain portions of Angelica Park, as more specifically identified in exhibit "A". **(Law)** *Introduced at the September 9 regular meeting; Summaries of agreements attached*

Discussed with the Conservancy and Alvernia at the October 16th Finance Committee meeting. Further amendments and refinements were addressed with Ms. Butler and the late request to include the park in Alvernia's Institutional Overlay was eliminated.

10. INTRODUCTION OF NEW ORDINANCES

A. Ordinance - Authorizing the transfer of \$56,363 from the General Fund account code (01-07-74-4101) Light and Power to account code (01-07-74-4216) Contracted Services for the purpose of payment to Susquehanna Municipal Finance for the Honeywell contract. **(Pub Works)**

B. Ordinance - Authorizing the transfer of \$ Transfer \$33,900.00 from 54-07-44-4525, Minor Capital Equipment, to the following: \$22,200.00 to 54-07-44-4000 Salaries; \$1,700.00 to 54-07-44-4913 Social Security; and \$10,000.00 to 54-07-44-4900 Fringe Benefits **(Bus Analyst)**

C. Ordinance - Transferring two Municipal Aide II positions in the Citizens Service Center Division of the Department of Administrative Services to the Waste Water Treatment Division of the Department of Public Works. **(Bus Analyst)**

Mr. Acosta stated that Ordinance B funds the transfer of the positions listed in Ordinance C.

D. Ordinance - Authorizing the transfer of \$14,000.00 from the IT Salaries line item (01-06-23-4000) to the IT Consulting Services line item (01-06-23-4222). **(Bus Analyst)**

E. Ordinance - Amending Chapter 308, Housing, of the City of Reading Code to provide for Part 3, Abandoned Real Property Registration. (Law) Advertised Sept 30th

Ms. Butler introduced representatives from a company that performs this type of service for other municipalities.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz provided a snapshot of the problems created through delayed bank ownership after the foreclosure process begins. She stated that properties quickly go into decline when the bank fails to take title, as the property owner is no longer responsible but is still listed as the property owner.

Ms. Butler learned about this initiative during classes through the Housing Alliance on blight.

The representative from Federal Property Registration Co., stated that Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. He stated that while the concept of property registration is simple, the process is cumbersome to manage. He noted the huge number of foreclosures since the housing crisis has dramatically increased the number of properties that banks and financial agencies must manage. Under the registration process, the company working with the municipality identifies the bank that is responsible then contacts them to trigger the registration, which provides Property Maintenance with a contact person to manage the maintenance issues at the property. He stated that the fee is usually \$200, which is split between the company and the municipality. He stated that this process works well, as the company acts as an ombudsmen

between the municipality and the bank. He explained how a property moves through the foreclosure process.

The representative stated that this process will not cause the bank to move a property through foreclosure faster. It will only provide a liaison.

F. Ordinance – 2014 Property Tax at fifteen and six hundred eighty-nine thousandths mills (.015689) on the dollar **(Council President)**

G. Ordinance – 2014 Land Value Property Tax) at twenty-two and nine hundred ninety-five thousandths mills (0.022995) on the dollar, or twenty dollars and ninety-nine point five cents (\$22.995) on each one thousand dollars is hereby levied and assessed on land, and a tax of twelve and five hundred fifty-nine thousandths mills (0.012559) on the dollar, or twelve dollars and fifty-five point nine cents (\$12.559) on each one thousand dollars is hereby levied and assessed on improvements to land **(Mayor)**

Mr. Acosta noted that both the Land Value and the normal property taxes are being introduced this evening, then Council can select one or the other after the issue is reviewed with the Administration.

Mr. Acosta noted the need for the Administration to prepare and introduce legislation to increase the Per Capita tax, due to the increased revenue line item in the draft budget. He stated that the legislation must be submitted to the City Clerk no later than Wednesday, October 9th at noon.

Ms. Kelleher stated that the Per Capita ordinance must layover during required the three (3) week advertising period.

H. Ordinance – amending Chapter 576 – Vehicles and Traffic, Part 12 Parades, Special Events, and Public Gatherings by making clarifications to the terms of the **ordinance (Bus Analyst)**

I. Ordinance – authorizing the execution of a First Amendment to Lease Agreement between the City of Reading and Alvernia University to provide for the leasing of certain portions of Angelica and the baseball field area, as more specifically identified in Exhibit “A”. **(Law)**

See section III above.

PENDING

Ordinance – 2014 General Fund Budget Advertised Sept 20th

Ordinance – 2014 Capital Improvement Program Budget Advertised Sept 20th

Ordinance – 2014 Position Ordinance

Ordinance – Resident Home Rule EIT; a tax of one and five tenths percent (1.5%) (Reduction of 0.1%)
Advertised Sept 30th, Oct 7th and Oct 14th

Ordinance – Commuter EIT; a tax of up to a maximum of one and two tenths percent (1.2%) (Reduction of 0.1%) Advertised Sept 30th, Oct 7th and Oct 14th

11. RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution – appointing James McDevitt to the Human Relations Commission (**Nom & Appts**)

B. Resolution – appointing Daniel Laws Jr to the Downtown Improvement District Authority (**Nom & Appts**)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:32 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*